

Elementary Learning Activity 1: How primary sources are used to construct historical knowledge

The historical importance of Fort Point and Trinity

Course Links: Elementary Social Studies (In Newfoundland and Labrador, Grade 5 Social Studies.)

Outcomes addressed:

Grade 5 Social Studies

SCO icp.0 – The student will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in utilizing concepts and processes from the social sciences

- icp.1 Use an inquiry model to explore and resolve significant questions
- icp.2 Apply intellectual tools to analyze events, ideas, issues, patterns and trends
- icp.3 Make reasoned assessments based on appropriate criteria

Unit 1: Exploring the Past

1.0 - Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how we learn about the past.

- 1.1 explain how primary sources are used to construct historical knowledge

Learning Goal and Description

Goal: To examine features of Trinity and Fort Point that made it a very important location within the colony of Newfoundland for the British during the 1800s, and a place of interest to other countries.

Brief Description: Students will examine the geographical features and historical information about Trinity and Fort Point, in order to understand why the Newfoundland Governor and the British would want the area fortified during the War of 1812.

Planning and Preparation

Sources and references will include

1. Brief overview of War of 1812. (*See opening page of this website.*)
2. Primary sources that indicate the strategic and economic importance of Trinity listed under the **Connection** section and highlighted in the *Summary Notes for Teacher*.
3. *Google Earth* or maps of the North Atlantic and Newfoundland
4. Maps and diagrams of Trinity Harbour and Fort Point from the Trinity Historical Society's (THS) Virtual Gallery: #s 31, 29, 25, and 11.

Preparations will include:

1. Classroom access to *Google Earth* or maps of the globe.
2. Access to (and preferably the ability to project enlargements of) images for a virtual tour of the Trinity Historical Society's archival material.
3. Student access to **Organizer #1** for recording their observations about the features Trinity Harbour (which will be placed in their Portfolio).

Strategies for Completion

Activation: (30 to 40 minutes of brainstorming, instruction and class discussion.)

Teachers may begin with the question: *Where did the War of 1812 take place and what countries were involved?* It should take no more than ten minutes to provide a very brief overview of the War. Teachers may then explain that this Learning Activity will examine a place called Trinity and a fort called Fort Point during the time Great Britain (and Newfoundland) was at war with the French and the United States (1812 – 1815).

But, first, students need to understand the features and history of Trinity that made it significant during this period. Teachers may ask students: How could they investigate the features of a bay or harbour in Canada? What sources might they use? What technology is available to assist in their study? These questions should stimulate students' thinking about the tools or sources for such investigations.

Teachers may move to an explanation of the purpose of this Activity: to use primary sources (and modern technology) to examine the history of Trinity and Fort Point to determine why Newfoundland's Governor and the British believed it was very important to protect Trinity in times of war. Teachers may use the quote from Sir Richard Whitbourne in 1620, when he wrote that Trinity was ".....the best and largest harbour in all the Land." Teachers may use either *Google Earth* or maps of the North Atlantic and the island of Newfoundland to engage students in an investigation of the physical features of Trinity. Students may work in pairs to record notes about the features of Trinity Harbour, using **Organizer #1**. Teachers will circulate and assist students who require support to complete their **Organizer**.

Connection: (30 to 40 minute group activity followed by a sharing session.)

As soon as students have completed **Organizer #1**, teachers will move to a discussion of **primary sources**. Students should understand that **Primary** sources are sources that come *from* the time period being studied. **Secondary** sources are any sources that come *after* the time period being studied. They should also understand the importance of primary sources (they are documents or first-hand accounts that were created at the time – or shortly afterward – and offer an “inside view” of events without anyone else's interpretation or analysis. Teachers may use the YouTube Video titled, Mr. D's Class—Sources: Primary vs. Secondary, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIdm6RguzRM>) to help consolidate students' understanding of the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Teachers may then take students on a virtual tour of the Trinity Historical Society's Website, to have students recognize the variety of evidence available from this period in the history of Trinity. Teachers may note the organization of the website and key sections to help focus students' search for information later in this Learning Activity. Students may make notes using **Organizer #2**. This will allow them opportunity to examine images at the website independently and outside of class.

Teachers may use the visuals and accompanying text from the Trinity Historical

Society's Website (Images 1, 11-14, text attachments) to highlight the increasing importance of Trinity as one of Great Britain's main "colonial interests" in North America from 1700 through the mid 1800s. (See *Summary Notes for Teacher.*)

Consolidation: (30 to 40 minutes for the cooperative learning activity. *Students will complete their journal entry independently.*)

Teachers may arrange students in pairs so that they may have a partner for discussion about the components of the task. Students may be assigned **one** of the following primary sources and use either **Organizer #3** or **Organizer #4** to analyze the aspects of the source that make it a valuable piece of information about the historical period:

- Image 14, view of Trinity and Fort Point at end of 1800's (**Organizer #3**)
- Image 19, Petition to Earl of Nottingham, 1701 (**Organizer #4**)
- Image 20, Letter Requesting the Fortification of Trinity, 1702 (**Organizer #4**)
- Image 22, Benjamin Lester's Mercantile Premises, 1770 (**Organizer #3**)
- Image 23, Benjamin Lester's Fleet, 1795 (**Organizer #3**)
- Image 24, Plan for the Admiral's Point, 1746 (**Organizer #3**)
- Image 40, Benjamin Lester's Diary entries, July 18th and 19th, 1762 (**Organizer #4**)
- Image 90, 1812 Engineer's Report on Admiral's Point (**Organizer #4**)

Students may be asked to write a journal entry in which they explain why the Newfoundland Governor and the British would want Trinity fortified during the War of 1812.

Extension: (*Optional.*)

Sometime after they have examined more primary and secondary sources related to Fort Point, students may take a field trip to the site. Teachers will need to organize a half day visit in order that students have adequate time to tour the various components of the Fort and examine the information at the Visitor's Centre.

Assessment and Evaluation

For this learning activity, teachers should

- Check to ensure students completed **Organizers 1-3 or 4**(assess level of detail and effort).
- Use a simple point system rubric that addresses both detail and effort/insight to assess students' journal responses under **Consolidation**.
- Provide feedback to encourage students to look for details as they examine primary sources.

ORGANIZER #1:* ".....the best and largest harbour in all the Land."

Directions: Use the information gathered from *Google Earth* (or maps) and the information in primary sources identified by the teacher to complete this sheet.

Analysis Sheet: Trinity and Trinity Harbour	
Location: Trinity and Fort Point as it would have been in 1812	
Description	
Landforms (Consider: size and shape of the surroundings, including Fort Point)	Bodies of Water (Consider: size and shape of harbour; location and size of harbour entrance)
Climate (Consider: seasonal temperatures and conditions)	Vegetation (Consider: what resources may have been available and what could have been produced?)
Evaluation	
Benefits	Challenges

*Based on sample chart provided in Grade 5 Social Studies Curriculum Guide, 2012, page 39

Organizer #2: Trinity Historical Society Website

Search Words:		URL:
1. Go to		
2. Go to		
3. Go to		
4. Go to		
5. At the Virtual Gallery I will find		
6. At the Stories ... I will find		

Organizer #3: Primary Source Analysis – Visual*

Name: _____		Date: _____	
Artifact Analysis			
Questions		Observations	
1. What is the setting and time? (Describe)			
2. Identify the people and objects. How are they arranged?			
3. What is happening in the visual?			
4. Was there a purpose for making this visual? Explain			
5. What happened around the world during this time period?			
6. From this visual, I have learned			

*Adapted from *Visual Analysis Organizer* in Grade 5 Social Studies Curriculum Guide, 2012, page 125

Organizer #4: Primary Source Analysis – Historical Document*

Name: _____		Date: _____
Historical Document Analysis		
Question	Observations	For further research
1. When was the document created?		
2. Where was the document created?		
3. How was the document created?		
4. What are the main points made by the author / editor in the document?		
5. What inferences can be made about the time period (era) in which the document was created?		
6. What happened around the world during this time period?		

*Adapted from *Historical Document Analysis* in Grade 5 Social Studies Curriculum Guide, 2012, p. 129

Summary Notes for Teacher

Trinity and Fort Point at end of 1800's (THS Virtual Image 14)

This photograph was taken around 1899. It shows the shoreline of Fort Point, of which the beach area was once occupied by fishing admirals. The photo demonstrates how sheltered the area was (for stages and flakes), and its closeness to the harbour entrance and the fishing grounds of Trinity Bay.

Letter to Earl of Nottingham, June 1, 1701 (Image 19)

- Clarifies that the merchants and traders to Newfoundland are requesting the fortification of Trinity in order to protect fishing interests in Trinity Bay and along the Northeast Coast as far as Greenspond.
- Other arguments provided include
 - work already supported by the King for the fortification of St. John's.
 - reference to the French bringing materials to build a fortification at Chapeau Rouge (further along the Northeast Coast).

Letter to Lordships Requesting Fortification of Trinity, 1702 (Image 20)

- This letter summarizes the initial requirements for the fortification of Trinity:
 - 20 sakers (medium size cannons), to be placed on Admiral's Point
 - Carriages, powder, cannon balls, and other materials to mount and arm the cannons
 - Nails and spikes to build a platform
 - 100 small arms (guns) for the inhabitants
 - An officer and a few soldiers to train the inhabitants and to command them during any attacks
- The letter references work on the Fort already underway.
- The letter also provides the following arguments:
 - The fortification will protect the ships engaged in the fishery in this part of Newfoundland
 - The fortification will exceed any other to date in Newfoundland
 - The harbour will provide a safe "haven" for up to 1000 British ships

Benjamin Lester's Mercantile Premises, 1770 (Image 22)

This painting was created around 1770. It shows the Lester residence – the first brick house to be constructed in Newfoundland. It also shows the numerous buildings that comprised the premises – Sail Loft; Workshop; Dockyard; Forge; Oil Vats; Seal and Skin House; Salt Store; Stable; Cellar; Hay Loft; Fish Store; Dry Provision Store; Cooper's Store, etc.

Benjamin Lester's Fleet, 1795 (Image 23)

This painting was created around 1770. Lester had a fleet of 30 vessels of various sizes (tonnage) that were used to gather fish and seals around Trinity Bay and along the Northeast Coast. Cured fish, seal skins and oils were traded mainly in Europe and the Caribbean.

Plan of the Admiral's Point, Trinity Harbour, 1746 (Image 24)

- This straightforward Plan shows clearly the placement of the original gun batteries, the location of the storehouse and powder magazine, the barracks, and the main landing area.

Benjamin Lester's Diary entries, July 18th and 19th, 1762 (Image 40)

Lester's diary offers a tremendous glimpse into the happenings "on the ground" in Trinity and "around Trinity Bay" during the brief period of the French invasion of Trinity in July 1762. The spelling errors and expressions will make the diary difficult for Grade 5 students

to read. The text attachment for July 18th and 19th will support students in their reading. The entries provide a description of the situation at the time and, as importantly, they give students opportunity to discuss the value of personal diaries as primary sources.

1812 Engineer's Report on Admiral's Point (Image 90)

This section of a larger Royal Engineer's Report on the condition of fortifications around Newfoundland highlights the state of Fort Point and confirms the fact that Trinity was generally considered "the finest harbour in the inland". The Engineer's Report highlights the following:

- General wish to keep the defences on Fort Point only (not on Sam White's point as well, in what is now Trinity East)
- Most of the cannons were destroyed by the French in 1762 (only one 24 pounder, two 12 pounders and three nine pounders were operational).
- The Magazine and Guard Room were destroyed, but a portable Magazine and a sentry box (capable of holding four or five men) had been put in place.
- The Fort would be protected by a volunteer group with two or three privates posted each night.
- The cannons on Ryder's Hill were not usable.
- Two companies of volunteers, 50 artillery and 100 armed with muskets and sealing guns, under the command of William Kelson and William Jenkins, were designated to provide protection.

Facts to share with students:

- As early as 1579, Sir Richard Whitbourne was promoting Trinity as an excellent harbour from which to engage in the Newfoundland fishery.
- The first Court of the Admiralty was held in Trinity in 1615.
- By 1700, Trinity was a strong year-round settlement and the main harbour for many British merchants, particularly from Poole. The rise in importance of Trinity was due to its large protected harbour with abundant land for mercantile premises, its proximity to the main shipping routes to Europe and the Caribbean, and its strategic location as a centre from which to establish fishing posts around Trinity Bay and along the Northeast Coast.)
- By the early 1700s, merchants in Trinity exported 30 to 40 percent of the cod, oil and seal produced in Newfoundland and had a summer population of approximately 2,000 (see THS Gallery Images 11 & 21, text attachments). By the early 1800s, Trinity had one of the most well-established resident populations outside of St. John's (see THS Gallery Image 13, text attachment).